

leadership. Based on conversations between the majority leader and myself, is the majority leader in a position to announce the funding and allocation assumptions for the next biennial committee funding period?

Mr. FRIST. I am pleased to respond to the inquiry of the Democratic leader. The budget assumptions for the next committee funding biennial period, subject to appropriations, will be an across-the-board freeze budget, with salary baselines adjusted by COLAs of 3.71 percent in 2005, as approved by the President pro tempore this week; and 3.3 percent assumed for 2006 and 3.5 percent assumed for 2007, although both the 2006 and 2007 actual COLA amounts remain subject to the approval of the President pro tempore.

Mr. REID. Is it my understanding that such a freeze will result in aggregate funding levels, subject to appropriations, as follows: March 1, 2005–September 30, 2005: \$53,243,918; October 1, 2005–September 30, 2006: \$93,467,365; and October 1, 2006–February 28, 2007: \$39,782,891, and that such funding levels include, but do not separately allocate, the additional 10 percent allocated to the committees in the 108th Congress?

Mr. FRIST. That is correct. With regard to committee personnel salary allocations between the majority and minority staff, the Democratic leader and I have agreed to a 60–40 split of all personnel funds, after allocations for non-designated administrative and clerical staff are agreed to by the chairman and ranking member pursuant to Rule XXVII of the Standing Rules of the Senate. However, the chairman and ranking member of any committee may, by mutual agreement, modify the allocation of personnel funds. The division of committee office space shall be commensurate with this allocation agreement.

Mr. REID. I thank the majority leader for his comments and assistance in reaching this agreement.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I could, if the distinguished acting leader would allow me to say a word, what we have just done has been something that is important for the institution. We want to show bipartisanship, and this has been very difficult. Briefly, because I know we have a joint session, let me say the chairmen and ranking members do yeoman's work around here. They work very hard.

What has just been completed is a compromise. I appreciate the cooperation of Senator FRIST and Senator MCCONNELL, Senator LOTT and Senator DODD. We have worked hard to arrive at this point, and we have shown some bipartisanship. We on the Democratic side, and I think I can speak for some of my friends on the Republican side, hope that the money the committees are going to get to do their work is not all needed. We didn't use it all last time. I hope we don't need it this time. But at least we have a framework where we have divided the responsibilities of the Senate on a 60–40 basis. I

believe that is fair. I hope never in the future of this institution, no matter what party is in control, will it ever change and be any lower.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, the Democratic leader, as well. I am glad we were able to work this out.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 241

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate receives from the House H.R. 241, the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECESS FOR JOINT SESSION OF THE TWO HOUSES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now recess to reassemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives for the joint session for the purpose of the counting of electoral votes and the Senate reassemble in the Senate Chamber on the dissolution of the Joint Session.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:52 p.m., recessed, to reassemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives for a joint session, and at 1:30 p.m. reassembled in the Senate Chamber when called to order by the Vice President.

#### OBJECTION TO COUNTING OF OHIO ELECTORAL VOTES

The VICE PRESIDENT. Pursuant to S. Con. Res. 1 and section 17 of title 3, United States Code, when the two Houses withdraw from the joint session to count the electoral vote for separate consideration of an objection, a Senator may speak to the objection for 5 minutes and not more than once. Debate shall not exceed 2 hours, after which the Chair will put the question: Shall the objection be sustained?

The clerk will report the objection made in the joint session.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Ms. TUBBS JONES, a Representative from Ohio, and Mrs. BOXER, a Senator from California, object to the counting of electoral votes of the State of Ohio on the ground that they were not, under all of the known circumstances, regularly given.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, thank you so much.

For most of us in the House and in the Senate, we have spent our lives fighting for what we believe in, always fighting to make our Nation better. We may not agree from time to time, but we are always fighting to make our Na-

tion better. We have fought for social justice. We have fought for economic justice. We have fought for environmental justice. We have fought for criminal justice. Now we must add a new fight: the fight for electoral justice.

Every citizen of this the greatest country in the world who is registered to vote should be guaranteed that their vote matters, that their vote is counted, and that in the voting booth in their community their vote has as much weight as any Senator, any Congressperson, any President, any Cabinet member, or any CEO of any Fortune 500 corporation. I am sure every one of my colleagues agrees with that statement, that in the voting booth everyone is equal. So now it seems to me that under our great Constitution of the United States of America, which we swear allegiance to uphold, which guarantees the right to vote, we must ask certain questions.

First, why did voters in Ohio wait hours in the rain to vote? Why were voters at Kenyan College, for example, made to wait in line until 4 a.m. to vote? It was because there were only 2 machines for 1,300 voters when they needed 13.

Why did voters in poor and predominantly African-American communities have disproportionately long waits?

Why in Franklin County did election officials use only 2,798 machines when they needed 5,000? Why did they hold back 68 machines in warehouses, 68 machines that were in working order? Why were 42 of those machines in predominantly African-American communities?

Why in the Columbus area alone did an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 voters leave polling places out of frustration without having voted? How many more never bothered to vote after they heard this because they had to take care of their families or they had a job or they were sick or their legs ached after waiting for hours?

Why is it when 638 people voted at a precinct in Franklin County, a voting machine awarded 4,258 extra votes to George Bush? Thankfully, they fixed it. Only 638 people had shown up, but George Bush got more than 4,000 votes. How could that happen?

Why did Franklin County officials reduce the number of electronic voting machines to downtown precincts while adding them in the suburbs? This also led to long lines.

In Cleveland, why were there thousands of provisional ballots disqualified when everyone knew that poll workers had given faulty instructions to the voters?

Because of this and voting irregularities in so many other places, I am joining today with Congresswoman STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, a 10-year judge, an 8-year prosecutor, a 6-year Member of Congress, a woman inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame. Folks, she has great credibility, and she asked just one Senator to take a couple of